How to Prepare an Evaluation Scope of Work

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A evaluation scope of work is a plan for conducting an evaluation; it conveys clear directions to the evaluation team.

The following sections briefly describe the elements usually found in scopes of work for USAID evaluations; Additional information on each element is found in TIPS: Preparing an Evaluation Scope of Work.

I. Elements of an Evaluation Scope of Work
   A. Introduction/Purpose and Goals of the Evaluation

   Principal questions: Why is the evaluation being done? Specify the need for the evaluation, its audience, and purpose. What type of evaluation is needed (mid-term, final, impact)?

   - Who wants the information? What do they want to know?
   - How will the information be used? When will it be needed?
   - How accurate must it be?

   B. Background of the Activity Being Evaluated

   Principal questions: What problem did the project address? What are the assumptions and hypotheses about the problem and the solutions? What were the major interventions used to address the problem and what is their status?

   - Give a brief description of the history and current status of the activities or programs, the names of implementing agencies and organizations involved to help the evaluation team understand the background and context of the activity or activities being assessed. SOWs for external teams will require more detail on background context.
   - Identify what is being evaluated. Is the focus on a single activity, a set of related activities in a results package, or a broader strategy for achieving a strategic objective? Use appropriate activity names,

titles, authorization numbers, funding levels, completion dates, and short descriptions to specify what is being evaluated.

- The SO description, project design documents, program reviews, and related material need to be provided to the evaluators.

C. Program Theory and Design of the Intervention

Principal Question: What was the underlying program theory of the interventions?

Describe briefly the problem that the project intervention was designed to solve. The design of an intervention follows an analysis of the problem. Such analysis will look at the context, assess the information available about the unacceptable situation, prioritize the various explanations, extract the main causal factors, and develop the main hypotheses about what are the most important factors to change and/or manipulate in order to bring about a better outcome. This process creates the underlying program theory of the intervention.

The theory of the intervention (Program Theory) can usually be deduced from the project proposal that lays out the design of the project. This is sometimes modified in the process of awarding a grant or contract.

These project documents need to be made available to the evaluation team.

D. Evaluation Questions – The Most Important Part of the SOW

Principal question: What are the key questions the evaluation will answer? Are they clear and specific?

Ensure that questions are management priorities. One approach to selecting the key questions is to ask the intended users (and stakeholders) of the evaluation to state those questions they would like answered.

Include the most important ones in the SOW.

E. Evaluation Methodology

Principal Questions: What is the overall research design strategy to answer the evaluation questions? What is the plan for collecting and analyzing the data?

Identify the standards of evidence required, the degree of data validity and reliability required.

- One approach is to prescribe the design (case studies, sample surveys, rapid appraisal method, comparative evaluation designs, and analysis of existing data, i.e. performance monitoring data, other secondary sources, and literature review).
- An alternative approach is to ask the evaluation team to propose a research design for the evaluation, in which they specify the methods to be used to answer the research questions, at the level of specificity required.

F. Evaluation Team Composition

Principal Question: The evaluation focus and methods determine the composition of the team.

Identify the team size, the qualifications and skills team members should have, such as language proficiency, in-country work experience, evaluation methods and data collection skills, knowledge of the sector/technical area, facilitation skills, gender mix, participation of USAID staff, partners, customers, and other stakeholders.

Including USAID staff strengthens the Agency's learning from its own experience but if the evaluation identifies problems, it may create a "conflict of interest" that could harm the candor of evaluation findings. (See TIPS Series: Conducting a Participatory Evaluation)

G. Schedule and Logistics

Principal Question: How much time will be needed in Washington and in the field and who will arrange the logistics?

A Bureau of the Census review of research plans shows the following allocation of cost /time to be spent on each aspect of the evaluation was typical. (link to document:

- Planning Stage -- 15 percent
- Preparation for field work -- 20 percent
- Field Implementation -- 30 percent
- Data Analysis -- 15 percent
- Reporting -- 20 percent

H. Budget

Principal Questions: How much will the evaluation cost and what is the source of the funds?

I. Deliverables: Report and Disseminating the Evaluation Findings:

Principal Question: What is the evaluation team expected to submit to USAID?

All the evaluation findings, conclusions, and recommendations should be documented in the Final Report. You may require other written reports, as milestones, during the evaluation. These can include a summary of the literature review, a draft work plan, data collection instruments, mid-evaluation report, and a draft as well as a final report.

This section should include the following:

- dates when draft and final reports are due;
- number of copies of report needed;
- languages in which report is needed;
- page limits and formats for the report;
- requirement for submitting copies of the evaluation report, in electronic form, to CDIE.

Oral Briefings: The contractor should organize two Mission-wide debriefings --- one in the beginning and one at the end of the assessment. Other briefings should be added as required.